1:Stanford U. S-4, 5 1956 AF14 Central China AF14

669

Today, the Communists laud the Taiping Rebellion, minimizing its effect in weakening the central government's power to resist foreign penetration. At a time when the western powers were making new demands and using force to back them up, the dynasty was reduced in prestige and deprived of revenue from its richest provinces. The destruction wrought by the Taipings cut into the throne's revenue for years afterward.

The Communists also make much of the revolutionary peasant nature of the Taipings. Although peasant unrest did have a major share in instigating the movement, it was rejected by a large part of the peasantry. The small landowners found no attraction in the Taipings' promise to communalize land-holding and institute other radical departures from the traditional social, political and economic system. Never instituted on any broad scale, the doctrine showed many affinities to an enlightened Communism. Furthermore, it was at the hands of a predominantly peasant army that the Taipings met their first serious setbacks and final defeat. The force was organized and directed by a Hunanese scholar-official, Tseng Kuo-fan.

D. Tseng Kuo-fan

175
645

Tseng is vilified by the present Chinese regime as an utterly ruthless, feudal-minded representative of the scholar-gentry class. In truer perspective, Tseng was one of the last great Confucian statesmen and one of the greatest exemplars of the highest traditions of the scholar

1:Stanford U. S-4, 5 1956 AF14 Central China AF14

175
645.

gentry class.[27] He was born near Changsha in circumstances as poor as those of the rebel leader he defeated. Unlike Hung Hsiu-ch'üan, Tseng met with brilliant success in the examination system and attained cabinet rank. His full public life thereafter was guided by the high moral principles of the Confucian tradition. In line with this tradition, he understood the economic causes of peasant discontent and the responsibility of scholar-officials to rectify these grievances.[28]

He was also aware of the part western economic penetration played in ruining Chinese businessmen and impoverishing the common people. Advising the emperor to resist further expansion of western business activity in China, Tseng urged that the Chinese foreign office should pay greatest attention to faithfulness, righteousness, and determined resolution in arguing on the basis of th welfare of the common people.[29] On the other hand, he recognized

---

27. The main source on Tseng Kuo-fan is W. J. Hail, Tseng Kuo-fan and the Taiping Rebellion, New Haven, Conn., Yale University Press, 1927.

28. See Tseng's report on causes and cures of peasant unrest as cited in Teng, op. cit., pp. 43-47.

29. See Teng Ssu-yu and J. K. Fairbank, China's Response to the West; A Documentary Survey, 1839-1923, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1954, pp. 62-64.

1:Stanford U. S-4, 5 1956 AF14 Central China AF14

the necessity of China to acquire for herself the technical know-how of the West if the nation were to survive. He recommended the training of students abroad and the attempt at home to produce the modern artifacts and arms of the West. During the Taiping Rebellion, he established some of China's first modern arsenals. To his organization of the Hunan peasant militia can be traced the beginnings of China's modern army.

Inadvertently, Tseng contributed to the disunity of China. In defeating the rebellion, he and his subordinate commanders were seldom able to obtain imperial direction and financial aid. To finance and organize efficient fighting forces, they introduced such innovations as personal armies, the likin (a tax on the movement of commercial goods within and across provincial borders), and provincial discretion in the collection and allocation of taxes. These measures laid the foundations for local autonomy and warlord rule that were to plague China up through World War II.

D. Monarchial Reform and Republicanism

For much the same reasons that made Kwangtung a leader in the Taiping Rebellion, that province again played a major part in the monarchial reform and republican movements. The two promotors of the Reform of 1898 were K'ang Yu-wei and his follower, Liang Ch'i-ch'ao.[30] Both

30. On K'ang Yu-wei, see Feng, op. cit., pp. 676-91. On Liang Ch'i-ch'ao, see J. R. Levenson, Liang Ch'i-ch'ao and the Mind of Modern China, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1953.